

## WOMEN, Part 4

### Women's Role in the Ekklesia – the Church

In this final message on “Women”, we address: should women preach? How about "prophesying"? Does the Bible ever allow women to be leaders? Can women be ordained pastors? Have there been women prophets – and will there be in the future? Were there ever any female apostles? You'll find this message very thought-provoking.

.....

Greetings again everyone.

WHY do we need this topic? I think women's role in church is one of the most widely misunderstood topics out there. In this message I try my best to show fully what God's word actually says, and I found that many tend to emphasize one set of verses while sidelining other verses that seem to disagree with their premise, calling them “difficult passages whose meaning is obscure”. So we'll try to be fair and study all the passages, even the ones that may seem to show a different side. What's important is not our preconceived ideas, but that we be led by God's truth as revealed in His words.

But first, **indulge me please to say this: Thirty years.** That's the wedding anniversary my wife and I have just celebrated the middle of August 2005. I'm so glad God created us male and female. I appreciate having the woman God selected for me for my wife. If any of you are wondering if marriages still last – yes they do. Ours is a solid 30 year strong one now, though God's been merciful to us, delivering us from many hard bumps in the road.

We had a wonderful week-long celebration of our faith in God and in each other, though there were sometimes some *big* bumps along the way. I say that because too many marriage relationships are in trouble. Male-female relationships are not what they should be. So I've produced this 4-part series on “Woman” to try to help whatever way I can. But first let me say, my daughter Rachel gave us a cd of Shania Twain's song “You're Still the One”. Carole and I had some detractors along the way, as the song says. “They said, ‘they're not gonna make it’” – but as the song says, “she's still the one, the only one, I love. She's still the one I kiss good-night, she's still the one I awaken to each day”. My prayer is, there will be many, many more such days with this fascinating, incredible, and beautiful woman God prepared for me; a woman I love more each day, each year.

But, as good as it was, let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. I know – as in all relationships – if we don't nurture this relationship, if we don't put another loving log on the marital fire, that even *this* 30 year marriage can *still* go south on us. And so can yours. But I just offer it to those of you who are struggling and wondering: you can do all things through Christ. If you're divorced, move on. Even God divorced His unfaithful wife. So I don't condemn anyone; I'm just trying to offer some hope to those of you who wonder about your own relationship.

Here's a plaque I presented to, and read to, my wife on our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary:

*With tiny tears that glistened, my eyes were fixed on you,  
and thinking of the life we'd share we softly said, "I do".*

*Our hearts were knit together from the time that we first met  
And memories were gathered that we will never forget.*

*While living daily with you, you saw the real me  
and still you chose acceptance, a loving mystery.*

*With many happy times gone by and others when we cried,  
Some days we'd share so endlessly, while other days we'd hide.*

*With all the ups and downs we've had in learning to be friends,  
I know that in this heart of mine, I'd marry you again."*

For this sermon, we'll wrap up the "woman" series. Satan is launching an all out assault on relationships – on our relationship with God, with our husband or wife, our relationships with our children, with the opposite sex at work and everywhere we meet them. Since life is all about relationships, this is a very, very important series. ***I hope you've listened to, or read, messages 1-3 before hearing this one.***

Keep in mind that **the typical prayer of the Pharisee** in Jesus day went something like this: "Lord, I thank you that you have not made me a woman, or a Gentile." Well, let me say this: I suppose I could also *thank* God that I'm not a woman, but I also thank God *for* women! Especially my dear wife! And I'm thankful for Gentiles too, by the way. And you women, start thanking God that He has made *you* a woman! You're probably thankful you're not a man!

## GENERAL POINTS ABOUT WOMEN AND CHURCH ROLES

- **mothers were to be respected as much as any father was. The 5<sup>th</sup> commandment was to honor father AND your mother.**
- **Women could be disciples**, and Jesus applauded Mary for wanting to learn. In fact it was women who were first aware of the empty tomb, and Mary Magdalene who first saw the risen Christ and was used to spread the good news of His resurrection in a time when women were considered totally unreliable witnesses. Who did GOD choose?

**Women also attended the feast days and holy days, not just the men. Many men have misunderstood that, using verses that talk about "shall your men appear" at the holydays, and seeming to not notice the many others where women were there!** We know that Jesus' mom—Mary – was at the Passover service when He was 12. We know **Hannah**, Samuel's mother, went to Jerusalem every single year (**1 Sam 1:1-7**)

**Deuteronomy 14:26** - says when you go to worship God, the ones God expected to be there were "you and ***your household***". That's what the Hebrew means – household. Everyone living at home. We can't force an adult today to worship, but the ideal was the entire family. Write down **Deut 16:13-15** – where it mentions your son *and your daughter* should be at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Verse 16 makes it clear that the males should be at *all* the holydays, and women were required at the Feast of Tabernacles. We know in Nehemiah's day, men, *women and children* were all there for the Feast of **Trumpets** – Rosh Hoshana (**Nehemiah 7:73; 8:1-3**), not just the Feast of Tabernacles. Nehemiah 8:1 says the men, women and children were "*echad*" – so united they were considered "one" (same word used to say God is one, *echad*).

**When it came to breaking the law, penalties were to be evenly meted out. Adulterers were to die as much as adulteresses were – but in practice, the men often got away with sexual sin.**

**Lev 20:10** “If a man commits adultery with the wife of a fellow Israelite, *both* he and the woman shall be put to death.” (TEV). NKJV – “both the adulterer and adulteress shall be put to death.” God’s law was fair. It did not discriminate against male or female.

**In verse 27, male or female wizards were to be stoned to death.** I do not like to watch movies about wizardry or sorcery, as they are abominations to God.

Ex. 21:22-23 says, if someone hurts a pregnant woman and she miscarries as a result, the LIFE of the man who strikes her is required! That makes it clear that God considered the unborn fetus or embryo as valuable human life. Let’s read it:

**Exodus 21:22-23** “If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. 23 ***But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life.***”

**What about mothers?** Many sermons have been preached about the importance of MOTHERS – and I’d certainly be remiss not to at least mention that in this sermon series. The hand that rocks the cradle truly – in a sense – rules the nation. Several kings who were righteous had wicked fathers, but perhaps it was their mom, mentioned by name, who made the difference. Mothers, never underestimate your influence in the life of your child – or any child.

*I think the biggest feeling of bias against women is the assumption that Paul in particular seems to have said some things that put women down. We’ll examine those. I doubt I’ll make anyone happy with my viewpoint on it, but I hope you’re willing to examine God’s word as your guide. Paul, as a leading Pharisee at one time, probably was married at one time, though clearly a single when he wrote 1/3 of the New Testament.*

### **WHAT WOMEN ARE CLEARLY TAUGHT TO BE DOING IN CHURCH**

Let’s remember that the church setting **is FAMILY based**: it’s simply God’s family of brothers and sisters – some older than others, some younger, but all part of God’s family. The church, as I see it in scripture, was never intended to be run like an army with a colonel barking orders at everyone who salutes as they go by. No way! **The church is to be thought of as a family.** The men are my brothers, the women are my sisters, and God is our Father, Jesus is our husband, and Jerusalem above is our mother (**Gal. 4:26**). (WE are the church. How can we be our own mother? Some incorrectly teach the church is our mother.) To have a brother, you have to have the same father and mother, otherwise he is a neighbor. Do *you* think of one another as brothers and sisters in a new family, made possible by the Holy Spirit?

**1 Timothy 5:1-2** “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a **father**, younger men as **brothers**, 2 older women as **mothers**, younger women as **sisters**, with all purity.”

**Ministers often like to feel their authority** and sometimes forget that an older man or woman need to be talked to the way you would talk to your father or mother: with utmost respect, not talking down to them or thinking they’re senile or something!

The older women, as mothers, were meant to be respected by the **younger women, who were expected to listen to the older women.** We don’t see much of that today. Partly because many older women are *reluctant* to speak up, some feel uneducated compared to the modern 25-35 year olds, and some have been discouraged by the lack of a warm reception when they *did* try to instruct the

younger women. When an older woman speaks, the rest of us should respectfully listen. I sometimes don't see that happening! Regardless, this is what God says to us:

**Titus 2:1-5** “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; 3 *the older women likewise*, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, **teachers of good things -- 4 that they admonish the young women** to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

**Here we see in the New Testament a clear verse that at least older women can be teachers – and can admonish the young women.** I would personally feel it's fine to have seminars for women, run by women.

We also have the examples of how several more well-to-do women provided for Jesus' needs from their own purse (**Luke 8:3**), and in fact, **Paul - in Philippians 4:2-3 - spoke of women who were co-laborers with him in the gospel**, whatever that meant. It's in scripture. So let's be honest that's it is there. Paul doesn't explain what he meant by “co-laborer”, so I won't either. But he commends them for their work in furthering the gospel.

**Philippians 4:2-3** “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche [probably 2 female deacons who had a disagreement] to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I urge you also, true companion, **help these women who labored with me in the gospel**, with Clement also, and *the rest of my fellow workers*, whose names are in the Book of Life.”

**In Acts 16:11-15, why not turn there -- we can read of Lydia**, a businesswoman – a “seller of purple”, who was converted when she heard Paul preach. She was a proselyte, a **Gentile woman** converted to Judaism, as the phrase “a worshiper of God” signifies. She was probably *from Thyatira*, a city of Lydia. Anyway, she sold in the city of Philippi those expensive purple garments made down in Thyatira, so she knew what she was doing. Her husband isn't mentioned, and she owned a house, so it is assumed she was a widow.

**I find this story in Acts 16:11-15** to be charming, almost funny. **The typical Pharisee of Paul's day – and Paul was a Pharisee – often prayed, “Lord I thank you I'm not a woman, or a Gentile”.** God was telling Paul in this story – “Paul, you've gotta get over some of your hang-ups about women and Gentiles”. In Philippi, there were so few Jewish men that apparently they didn't have a synagogue. You had to have 10 Jewish men to form a synagogue. So the **WOMEN** met down at the river. **Paul's first converts in Europe were women. Gentile women** at that. Lydia and her household are baptized, And Lydia, kept after Paul, the Greek implies that she kept pestering him, until she persuaded him to come visit and stay with her in her home. Paul apparently used her house often – and at the end of Acts 16, after Paul had been imprisoned, he once again went to Lydia's house. It *probably* was home-base for the church at Philippi for some time.

Other scriptures for women are the ones we used in the previous messages, such as **1 Peter 3:1-6**, where they are admonished to be submissive and to focus on inward beauty of a quiet spirit.

### WOMEN ALSO NEED TO KNOW GOD'S WORD

Ladies, also keep in mind that just about everything in the Bible includes you too. Everything it says about why we are being called, applies as much to women as men. Everything it says about the kingdom of God, and inheriting the kingdom, and being trained now to be teachers – it all applies!

**Galatians 3:26-29** “For you are *all* sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, **there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**”

That came from God, written by Paul, a man trained as a Pharisee to look down on women. This is a total sea-change for him to write there is *spiritually no difference between a man and a woman*.

Now whatever you conclude from scripture about this topic —whether women can teach and speak on spiritual issues or not, for example – this much I know must be true as a minimum, to start with:

- **you women need to *know* the scriptures because you *too* have to gain personal instruction, correction and admonition from them. (2 Tim 3:16-17).** *Jesus* certainly felt that way in defending Mary’s right to listen – and not just do the kitchen work.
- **ANYONE’S most effective sermon ever, even *my* most effective sermon ever, will always be the fruit of our lives** in service, in godly interaction with others, in the light of a changed and converted life that witnesses to others of what Jesus in us can do. This is why Peter said some husbands may be won over “*without* a word” (1 Peter 3).

**Whether or not you ever preach a formal sermon, your life is ALWAYS preaching either a good sermon – or a bad one.** You mothers have tremendous impact on your children and husband by your lives. You need God, and His word, working in you mightily *each day to preach the best sermon you can preach – by your daily lives*. For that matter, what I just said, also applies to us men. It’s all about our relationship with God, and how we *live* – a wise man once said. So even though you may never give a sermonette or sermon – you can *live* a sermonette and sermon constantly. Your words of encouragement, or feeding someone from God’s word at the right time, can have more impact than a stirring sermon delivered to thousands in a stadium. Never forget that.

### **THE BIBLE IS CONSISTENT BEGINNING TO END; there WERE FEMALE LEADERS**

This next section is essential. **God changes not. The Bible is consistent from beginning to end.** Let’s start with the topic of female leaders and prophets **in the Old and New Testament** – and get that foundation first. **Can women ever be leaders in a church setting?** If so, under what circumstances? Then we will tackle the 2 main passages used by so many to show that women can’t preach or have any authority – and go into the context, the Greek, and see clearly what that is saying.

Be turning now please to **Micah 6. I remind you of the basic PREMISE of Genesis 1-2, that God created man first, to be the head, the leader – and that’s what GOD wanted, that’s what God set as the pattern.** Not because women are inferior, or of lesser intellect, or less ability. It’s just what God set in motion. God says so in the New Testament, and notice I say “GOD Says so” – and not “Paul says so”. There certainly were not a *lot* of women mentioned as leaders – but there are *several*!

If I were to ask you to write down whom you consider would be ranked in the top 3-4 leaders who led Israel out of Egypt, who would you name? We’d think of Moses and Aaron. Then who? Most of us would probably say Joshua and Caleb next. But when *God* mentions three leaders whom *He* sent over Israel – who does *God* name as the main leaders?

**Micah 6:4** “For *I* brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; And *I* sent *before you* Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.”

“sent before” signals ‘those in front’, i.e., leaders.

Keep the balance in mind: we do not have any instance I can think of where Miriam led *men*. We do have her leading the *women* in a victory song and dance after crossing the Red Sea – you can read it yourself in **Exodus 15:20** – “Then Miriam the **prophetess**, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the *women* went out after her with timbrels and with dances.”

Let's look now at **another significant leader in Israel, who was also in her case a leader of men, as best as I can determine: Deborah, the judge and prophetess – turn to Judges 4:4**. When we read the verses about her, may we call her a “leader” or not? You decide when you read them. Some men will object to me calling her “a leader in Israel” because of hanging on to the old notion that only men can be leaders. But how could a woman *judge*, without having the position of leadership? How could *we* judge in the coming kingdom of God without also being leaders? A judge *is* a leader in a community! His – or her – decrees certainly affect the entire area.

#### **Judges 4:4-7**

“Now Deborah, a **prophetess**, the wife of Lapidoth, was **judging** Israel at that time.”

Pause here just to say that the word “judge” in Hebrew is Strong's #8199, and according to Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon, means “to judge, govern, to rule, vindicate, punish” and so on. *Being just a prophetess is one thing, but to also be a regional judge is quite another. This woman had some authority! I can't honestly say otherwise.* Now it is also true, that of the several judges mentioned in the Bible, this is *the only judge who was female*. But at least we do have one. You can use the common argument that God used Deborah because the men weren't stepping up to the plate – and maybe so! But it clearly wasn't wrong in God's eyes to use a woman in this case.

**CONTINUING NOW IN JUDGES 4:5**: “And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. **And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.** 6 Then **she** sent and **called for** Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, “Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded, ‘Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men....’” and from there urges him to act!

That's pretty strong stuff. Frankly it caught me a bit off guard, myself. *She tells a general, a military man, to come to her!* Let that sink in. And Israel is coming to *her* for judgment! If I took the time to show you other places in the Old Testament where and how that same word “*judgment*” is used, you'll see there was some strong leadership this woman was also exercising. It's used over 200 times – of God, of Moses, of so many. Same word. It's the *same word used in Exodus 18:22-26* when Moses picked other judges to help him. Perhaps it's a reflection of the *lack* of leadership from the men. **But in any case, Deborah was more than just a prophet.**

The fact remains, when you read her story in Judges 4-5, the military general, **Barak**, refused to fight against **Sisera** without Deborah right there beside him. He felt he needed her presence and commanding influence (**Judges 4:8**). She certainly *was a significant regional leader* when leadership and inspiration were needed! *It may also be true, that this may also be a statement on the lack of leadership by the men in her day!* Her ode of victory indicates some brilliance and creativity and knowledge of God that exceeded the times she was in (**Judges 5**). She was like an ancient Joan of Arc in the sense of a female lightning rod of confidence.

And don't forget the rest of the story: that evil Sisera was actually finally nailed, literally, by *another* woman, who was not afraid to take action: Jael. You can read her brave story in **Judges 4:17-22**. And I hope you take the time to really *delight* in the "song of Deborah *and* Barak" in **Judges 5**. I can just see this woman prophet now, just beaming, as she helped lead in this song (Judges 5:1). Jud 5:7 is very interesting. *Deborah* says that life pretty much *stopped* in Israel "*until I, Deborah arose, a mother in Israel.*" Hmmm. Read it! Verses 13-15 talks about the leaders of some of the tribes of Israel coming down and uniting behind this woman and Barak. *And GOD inspires the verses in His word to praise those men who got behind this woman.*

I had to think about that, because I too have been raised with very much the notion that men are the leaders and that it would be wrong for women to ever lead a man, ever. That was my ultra-conservative upbringing, but I've had to have a reality check from God's word to see if in fact I wasn't taught an overboard reaction.

Having said all that, we don't find any other female judge in the Bible that I know of! **God's original intent** in creating man first, and giving him the commands in the garden to teach his wife when she would later be created – that intent, still seems clear to me, *without* – listen carefully – necessarily always precluding *any* female leadership in certain situations. ***There is not one hint that Deborah did wrong in standing up– as Judges 5:7 says – to change things in Israel when apparently the men did nothing.***

***I personally take from this that in a LEADERSHIP situation*** – let's say choir director – if you have a qualified male, use the male. God's apparent intent is for men to be the leader, but just as some women find it hard to submit, some men find it hard to stand up and do something. Others become tyrants. God wants each of us to learn godly leadership, which is based on loving service. In the case of a choir director, if you have no qualified man, but have a talented and trained female who could direct a choir and lead in *worshipful songs* to God – I would see no problem with that! I would gladly sing under the baton of a qualified female director. That won't sit well with *either* modern women's libbers who want more than that, or ultra-rightwing red necks, but that's how I feel guided by scripture with this story of Deborah.

Commentaries and Bible dictionaries also indicate that **Isaiah's unnamed wife** may have been a prophetess, but I find that hard to prove.

**Turn now to 2 Kings 22** for another incredible woman and thought provoking situation. Remember we will use ALL the Bible, including the so-called "difficult passages" – but God is consistent, so I'm just laying some groundwork so we can understand the other scriptures better.

**2 Kings 22:11-20 HULDAH – did she teach what God's word said? This little known prophetess who lived in the same time period as Jeremiah – in incredible. Read the passage with me please in 2 Kings 22.**

11 Now it happened, when the king (JOSIAH) heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. 12 **Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, 13 "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."**

14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke *with her*.

*Note something here: guess who they didn't go to-- one of the great prophets who was around at that time – JEREMIAH. I think even Zephaniah was a contemporary. But they didn't go to these male prophets! They went to the woman Huldah.*

**15 Then she said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me [i.e. the king- v20], 16 "Thus says the LORD:** and she proceeds to announce God's coming punishments on the nation, except that Josiah would be treated mildly because of his humility -- then end of verse 20, **"So they brought back word to the king."**

*Got that? A righteous king Josiah tells his high priest and scribe to go to a woman prophet, the wife of Shallum, to hear what words of instruction there might be from God. Whatever we have thought other verses say or seem to say about teaching a man, we have to be honest with all of God's word that here we have a case where a righteous king asked a woman to reveal to him what were God's instructions for him, and was told, was taught what God had to say. **A case of a godly woman passing a spiritual message, to a righteous man, a righteous KING no less.** And probably not the only time she did. Again, this is extremely rare in the Bible – but here it is.*

*I still believe that God's model, and intent, was for men to be the leaders, shown by the fact He created Adam first, had him name the animals by himself, told Adam about the 2 trees without Eve even having been created yet – and that was the ideal. That is what Paul says later too. But having said what the ideal is, we have to admit that at various times there were women leaders and spiritual and godly female prophets in a time and age when it was very hard to be a leader over anything if you were a female.*

### **FEMALE PROPHETS IN THE NEW COVENANT PERIOD**

**Luke 2:36-38** “Now there was one, Anna, a **prophetess**, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant **she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem**”

She spoke of the coming Messiah “to all” – to everyone -... would that not include men? Think about that. So the Christ was blessed by a male prophet Simeon (v 34), and by a female prophet Anna.

The fact that *after* Christ's death and resurrection there were female prophets is clear. I'm using the term “female prophets” instead of “prophetess” to really jar our brains awake that some righteous prophets were female!

**Acts 21:8-10** “On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.”

Some translations say “were prophetesses”.



***I want to ask you, the listener right now – would your church, right now allow there to be fairly young women in your church to be prophets? Why not? It's written up here as a matter of course.***

**What does “prophesied” mean?** NT Strong's word #4395 “*propheteuo*” (prof-ate-yoo'-o); from NT:4396; to foretell events, divine, **speak under inspiration**, exercise the prophetic office: KJV – prophesy

That Greek word is used 28x in the New Testament – including the prophesying of the 2 witnesses. whatever meaning you subscribe to from the Greek, would your church allow either? The Greek can mean either inspired speaking, or it can mean predicting, foretelling. So Philip's daughters either were sharing some inspired thoughts and words – or were outright predicting and foretelling the future. Either way, I find it hard to see some church groups allowing either usage today. *But it appears routine in Paul and Peter's day.*

**Again, is your church, are you, ready for women who are given the gift of prophesying?** Why do I say “ready”? Because **JOEL 2:28-29** says in the last days our young women *will* be prophesying and in fact Peter said it happened on the day of Pentecost. Now many have been told for years that the Bible prohibits women from speaking spiritually at all in church or to men. We'll see in a minute the verses used. But again, ***remember the Bible has to be consistent.*** The scripture cannot be broken. ***I have to agree that there can be a difference between prophesying and outright preaching. And to prophesy, you don't have to be ordained.*** After all, many men speak under inspiration who aren't ordained either!

Let's see how that word is used on the **DAY OF PENTECOST** and how it involved **women** in a big way – whatever your preference, leaning, or bias or insight into women's roles in church, let's see what happened starting just prior to the day of Pentecost, so let's start in **Acts 1**.

**Acts 1:14-15** “These *all* [verse 12-13 listed the 11 remaining male *apostles*] continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, ***with the women and Mary*** the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. 15 And in those days Peter stood up in **the midst of the disciples** (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty),...”

**The word “disciples” also refers to the women** – as is clear here, as well as in **Acts 9:36**, where it says “*there was a certain disciple* named Tabitha” or Dorcas. Women are, and were, also full fledged “disciples”. It just means “student, learner”.

So back in Acts 1, it is clearly saying the women disciples also were “with one accord in prayer and supplication”. Then we come to chapter 2, after Matthias is chosen as Judas' replacement for the spot of 12<sup>th</sup> apostle. And by the way, in **Acts 1:21**, they considered only *men* to be a replacement. The Greek is “*aner*” – meaning a male. The inspired word is not “person” – but a “man” – whom they considered as the replacement for Judas Iscariot. *There were many “apostles” if you study all the places where the Greek “apostolos” is used, but “the 12” were a special group.* And only men were considered for that role. It is interesting, for all those wanting to make Mary Magdalene an apostle, that she was not even considered, according to Acts 1:21.

Now continuing in Acts 2:

**Acts 2:1-4** “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were **all** [*this has to include the women* of Acts 1:15] **with one accord in one place.**”

[Why were they all together in one accord? Because the Feast of Pentecost is a commanded assembly; it's one of God's holydays which I still keep, and if they weren't keeping it that year, on the right day, they would not have received the Holy spirit that day! My point though: they are together, one accord, one place, in a house (v.2), ready for a meeting to start. In other words, this is clearly a church setting, though meeting in a house.]

**Acts 2:2** “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it **filled the whole house** where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and **one sat upon each of them**. 4 And they **were ALL filled** with the holy spirit [**this includes the women disciples**] and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave *them* utterance.”

Put biases and old beliefs aside for a second and just read what it says. **ALL 120 – including the women – are now being filled with the Holy spirit and speaking under inspiration in other languages that they didn't naturally know**, but were intelligible languages that people from other parts of the world could understand (**Acts 2:6-11**) .

**My point though: the women were speaking too.** Acts 2:4 clearly says “they were **ALL** filled with the spirit *and began to speak*.” Whether they spoke to just other women, or to men and women, we're not told – but we *are* told, that here are women who are speaking **in a church setting**, in a **church meeting** where they had been all sitting quietly in one accord, in one place (**Acts 2:1-5**).

I cannot deny Scripture. **“ALL” cannot, does not, mean just the men, or you'd have to be dishonest with scripture.**

How can I be so sure? Because when Peter saw what was going on, he *specifically* says that what everyone was hearing and watching – including the women speaking under inspiration of the Holy Spirit – was a direct fulfillment of Joel 2 where it says even “your **DAUGHTERS**” would be prophesying!

#### **Acts 2:16-18 (Peter's sermon)**

16 But **this** is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; **Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy**, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My **maidservants** I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And **they shall prophesy**.”

The “ALL” who were filled with the holy spirit **included the women!** And they ALL spoke in tongues that day. *Not just the men. If any of you don't want to believe that women can ever speak under inspiration, in a church setting, what do we do with this verse?* And please note I did not say “preach” or be ordained – I am just talking about speaking in a church setting.

Makes one think, doesn't it?

Here's another one about women prophesying – which is inspired speaking or foretelling:

**1 Corinthians 11:3-5** “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, **the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.**

Now liberal women: this is also in scripture. We all have a head over us. My head is Christ. My wife’s head is me. But men – if you’re the head, don’t be a *heel* either, in the way you exercise that God-given office to represent *Him* in your family.

1 Cor. 11:4-5 “Every *man* praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. 5 **But every woman** who prays *or prophesies* with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.”

So whatever Paul says *later* in 1 Corinthians, we see here that **he acknowledges that women pray and even prophesy**. Same word “propheteuo” again. Inspired speaking. Foretelling. Both involve words, and speaking. What do we do with this passage? Is there anything wrong with a woman being able to speak in an inspired way?

I’m not saying “preach”, and *neither* is this verse allowing for ordination. Let’s just read it for what it says without adding or detracting from it.

*And for those of you wondering about 1 Timothy 2 – not permitting a woman to teach or have authority over a man, and the passage in 1 Cor 14 which says “women are to keep silent in the churches” – we’ll get to those soon.*

But first, can Paul really mean that a woman can *never*, in *any* circumstance, teach a man? We must use *all* the scriptures when trying to explain verses that seem to have some difficulty in the Greek.

Acts 18:24-26 “Now a certain Jew named **Apollos**, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man **and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus**. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. **When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, THEY took him aside and [they] explained to him the way of God more accurately.**”

### **If that’s not teaching a man, what is?**

Clearly here, a man and his wife both helped this learned preacher named Apollos, understand the way of God more accurately. It says in verse 26, “THEY” took him aside and explained things to him. It’s also interesting that in the six times Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned, as they became church leaders, SHE is mentioned first 3 of the 6 times. I find that very interesting.

Paul even said, listing her first, Romans 16:3-4 “Greet **Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers [plural] in Christ Jesus**, 4 who risked their own necks for my life...” Aquila and Priscilla are so often mentioned together. What a lovely marriage and perfect unity they must have had.

And obviously, I believe everyone would agree that women could teach their children, even their sons, as Timothy’s mom and grandma did.

I’ll hasten to add that my own wife studies the Bible by the hour every day and has a grasp of it that is very helpful to me when I discuss things with her.

### **SHOULD WOMEN BE ORDAINED PASTORS?**

Many churches ordain women. There are thousands of women pastors. Even synagogues now have women rabbis. Here's my take on it, I believe based on scripture. Before I say though, let me tell you – if anything, my upbringing was one surrounded by a lot of female preachers. My own mother was an ordained preacher up until the time I was born, when she became part of a church group that didn't believe in that. My father was a charismatic preacher who used many women preachers.

Here's my belief after careful prayer and study: though I've clearly shown so far that women *did* prophesy in church, as in **Acts 2** and even **1 Corinthians 11:5**, and there is nothing wrong with that, **I see nothing in scripture to support ordaining women as church pastors – but there are ample scriptures to show that God does not intend to totally sideline our women either!**

**Joel 2 will happen in the future again, I feel. Are YOU – and is YOUR church – ready for it?**

I do see them being able to discuss Biblical concepts, and even teaching men biblical concepts *as Priscilla did to Apollos*. You just can't get around that! We see Lydia, the first Gentile woman convert, hosting a church in her home in Philippi. We see Jesus using WOMEN to help spread the good news of who He was – the Samaritan woman at the well who told the whole city, and Mary Magdalene – the first to see and touch the risen Christ! We saw at least three who were prophetesses, and Miriam is even called a leader God sent before Israel. We saw how righteous king Josiah sent the High Priest to hear the word of the *Lord from a woman* – Huldah the Prophetess!

*We cannot be honest with scripture and ignore these passages, whatever our current beliefs are.*

But **nowhere do I see Jesus or the apostles ordaining any** women as His 12 disciples or apostles. The spiritual teachers and leaders were men. Some say it was due to the taboos of His day. But Jesus gave little heed to taboos and biases, so that argument doesn't have any impact on me. Jesus would have gladly chosen a woman to be an apostle if He wanted a woman apostle, regardless of taboos, as He routinely did things against the cultural taboos of His day – like talking to the Samaritan woman alone, for instance (John 4).

*Some also say Jesus and the apostles didn't ordain women because it would have led to their death, in the culture of their day. That can't fly as a valid argument either because the ordained men also all died, some real soon – like Stephen and James -- for their faith! And women were being imprisoned and killed along with the men anyway (Acts 8:3), so that's nonsense. **There can be no doubt that countless martyrs in the early church were women.***

- In the scriptural instructions on whom to pick as ordained pastors and leaders, the instructions are clearly for men. This is not to say that women couldn't preach equally well – often even better – sermons and sermonettes than the men; but I'm stating what scripture is stating. Sure, I believe some women could lead in excellent Bible studies. But what does God say?

**1 Timothy 3:1** says the candidate for pastoral ordination “must **be the husband of one wife**”. God would have clearly worded it differently – such as “have only one *spouse*” if a woman could also be considered as a church pastor. **Pastors do have some authority (Titus 2:15; 2 Cor. 13), and scripture indicates only men were considered and ordained to this position.**

Prophets and prophetesses were given that role as a gift from God; they're given insight, maybe even visions. Godly pastors are chosen we hope also by God, but through other pastors who appointed them to that position, as we see in **Titus 1:5-6**, where once again the one being ordained is to be the "husband of one wife". (The first 7 deacons were chosen by *the congregation*, however, and then presented to the apostles for ordination – **Acts 6:2-6**).

**NOWHERE do I see in the New Testament any church pastor being clearly female.** Many conclude that "Junia" in **Romans 16** was female, and an apostle at that.

### **Female APOSTLES?**

**Romans 16:7** "Greet Andronicus and **Junia**, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, *who are of note among the apostles*, who also were in Christ before me." Most dictionaries and commentaries feel "Junia" *is* a female, while the name with an "s" on the end would be male.

**Also keep in mind that "apostle" was sometimes used loosely – since the Greek "apostolos" means "one sent".** WE tend to think of "apostle" as the huge title of top leader, but it is used several times simply as someone sent for a special mission by a particular church. Let me give you several examples where the English word used is "messenger", but is from the Greek word "apostolos".

**2 Corinthians 8:23** "If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, **they are messengers** (*apostolos*) of the churches, the glory of Christ."

**Philippians 2:25** "Yet I considered it necessary to send to you **Epaphroditus**, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but **your messenger** (*apostolos*) and the one who ministered to my need"

**Were Titus and Epaphroditus truly an "apostle" as we think of the word, or just a messenger? Probably a messenger.**

So, in **Rom 16:7**, even if Andronicus and Junia *were* being called "apostles", *even* if Junia is female, this still doesn't prove that she was just more than a messenger, or one sent for special mission, like Phoebe of Rom 16:1-2, for that matter. There were **the 12 apostles**, whose names will be on the Heavenly Jerusalem -- and Paul – a special apostle sent by God Himself to the Gentiles – and then there were MANY others "sent" who were *not* of the same stature, capacity or calling as the 12 or as Paul.

**Some want to believe that where it says about Junia and Andronicus : "who are of note among the apostles" means they were top notch apostles. I read it for what it says:** Andronicus and Junia (or Junias) were outstanding Christians, and the apostles took note of them, were aware of them. TEV says "*who are well known among the apostles*". That is not necessarily saying they WERE apostles. *If they were truly top notch apostles, surely we'd know much more about them than just a quick footnote at the end of an epistle.*

Some moderns wish to make Mary Magdalene an apostle. There is absolutely no Biblical support for this false notion. The so-called "gospel of Mary Magdalene" is spurious, was not written by her, and has no basis to be considered "scripture".

Other than the very broad definition of “apostle” to include being a “messenger” in a general sense – **there is no record of a single female ever being ordained as an apostle in the same sense that Paul was an apostle or the 12 apostles.** Neither have I found a single place where it is clear that a woman was an ordained pastor. There were women who hosted churches – such as Lydia – and Aquila and Priscilla hosted a church in their home too (Rom 16:4-5) – but there’s nothing to clearly say any woman was ever ordained a church pastor.

**Romans 16:1-3** speaks of **Phoebe**, a female deacon, apparently a successful businesswoman. No problem. But not ordained as a pastor or preacher. Deacons were not required to be “apt to teach” – just elders. PAUL however, did encourage the brethren in Rome to give her whatever assistance she needed; to “work with her” as we’d say today. She was a great help to many, Paul says. The Greek word there means the person who used to give Olympic athletes all the help they needed to be ready. So Paul is telling the Roman brethren, even the men, to help out Phoebe, support her, do whatever she asks, help her in any way you can. But it doesn’t go beyond that.

**SO NO, I DO NOT BELIEVE SCRIPTURE SUPPORTS women *being ordained* as church pastors, or that women should be giving sermons *from the pulpit*. But can they speak about spiritual matters though? The prophetesses did, the women on Pentecost did, the Samaritan woman did, the Corinthian women who prophesied with their heads covered did, Priscilla did, Huldah did, Anna did, and on and on!**

**Now the controversial scriptures that have been wrangled over for centuries!**

Man was created first to be the leader, the head of the wife (**1 Cor 11:3; Eph. 5:23**). In **1 Cor. 11:3**, the very same words that are translated “woman” and “man” are the same words translated as “wife” and “husband” in **Eph. 5:23**. The word for woman or wife is *gune* or *gyne*, and the word for man or husband is ANER. Some scholars say when those 2 words are put in close proximity, it should usually be translated as “wife” and “husband”, rather than as “woman” and “man” – but even there, there’s no unanimity on this.

I personally believe the translators got it more correct in Ephesians 5 when they translated those words “husband and wife” – rather than “man and woman”. **For can it true that “the head of woman is man” – even if the woman has no man!? If the woman is single, does she have men in general** over her, or is this not talking more about the fact that the head of a *married* woman is her husband?

### **WHAT ABOUT 1 TIMOTHY 2 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 14**

I’ve read the papers from both sides of this issue, but I use the Bible as my guide. We’ve already seen that God does use women as prophets, to deliver spiritual messages – as even on the day of Pentecost. We also saw that Paul had women co-laborers, and told the Romans to assist Phoebe in any way she needed. Sounds to me like a lot of respect being given by Paul for women.

**1 Timothy 2:11-13** “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. 12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”

Though it is true that the word used here for “woman” is *gyne* or *gune*, which can mean either a wife or woman, the context from the previous verses would favor Paul is talking to all women in this

case. I originally felt surely he means “I do not permit a wife to teach or usurp authority over a husband, but to be at peace” (silence) – but when we look at the verses that precede this passage, the same word for woman (gune/gyne) says they are to dress modestly. *All* women were to dress modestly, not just wives, for example.

The Greek for “man” is andros, from “aner” – which can also be translated “man” or “husband”. But again, the context prior that all men lift holy hands – surely wasn’t limited to husbands. As an aside, do you men lift your hands when you pray, or are you afraid that will look Pentecostal or charismatic, so you don’t? Paul lifted his hands in prayer. Paul taught it. Solomon and others also did.

Is Paul talking about a women never having any authority anywhere – or just in church settings? We’ve already shown that Deborah had some considerable authority, as did wives of kings in many cases.

The words “*usurp authority over*” have been translated elsewhere as “domineer” or “dominate”. Paul is telling the women to chill! Relax a bit. Remember the divine order – man first, man the leader – and let men learn their role in a loving way, as CHRIST would lead – as he says in Ephesians 5. Remember, though scripture is to apply to us today as much as back then, we need to also consider its original context. This was written to Timothy in **EPHESUS**. The Ephesian women considered themselves descendants of the legendary **Amazons**: women who ruled over men, defeated men, didn’t feel they needed men’s leadership. The Ephesian women of this time also took pride in trying to prove their ancestry to those amazing Amazons. That is also possibly why the command to not argue over genealogies.

Frankly brethren, I see a problem with overstating these verses on either side of the argument. I can’t accept that 1 Timothy 2 means women are to keep their mouths shut at all times – because we saw that Priscilla taught Apollos. We saw Anna spoke to ALL, including the men, about the coming Messiah. All Christians are given gifts – men and women. We are all one in Christ. And there were prophetesses, and women who spoke under divine inspiration on the day of Pentecost in a church setting. Other than 1 tim 2:8, in context of prayer, there isn’t much here that even discusses a church setting. And since Paul does mention Adam and Eve – who were husband and wife – there could be an argument made that Paul could be primarily talking about WIVES not domineering their husbands, but to be willing to learn from them. *The Greek gune and aner would permit that translation.* In verse 15, about child bearing, how could that apply to all women, if the women were single, unmarried? So I personally can accept the possibility that the words translated “woman” could be translated “wife” – but even there, there are some problems with that interpretation.

**So when considering all the Bible, I personally believe this: women can talk spiritually, but not be ordained preachers.** Women can have some authority outside of the church setting without feeling guilty, but in church, God wants men to be in charge, for whatever His divine reasons are. But we men are to exercise that authority in a loving way, giving of ourselves humbly to those we lead by service – not as lords and rulers, as the pagan Gentiles exercising authority over others.

**NOW LET’S TURN TO the other passage used in this debate – which is 1 Corinthians 14:**

**1 Corinthians 14:34-35** “Let your women[Greek is *gune* again] (or, wives) **keep silent in the churches** [ekklesia], for **they are not permitted to speak**; but they are to be submissive, as the law

**also says.** 35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands [*aner*- men, or husbands] at home; for it is shameful for women (**wives?**) to speak in church.”

First of all, some writers say it is a quote from a letter Paul received from the Corinthians, and in v 36, he puts it down – says this theory. Since those early letters used no quotation marks, *we have no way of knowing for sure if verses 34-35 are from Paul, or a quote from a letter from the Corinthians (1 Cor 7:1).* IF this is a quote, that changes and explains everything pretty easily. But we don't know. It is true, that verse 36, when read carefully, seems odd coming right after verses 34-35.

Clearly women are allowed to prophesy (**1 Cor 11:5**). So what's the context here?

**The entire previous context of 1 Cor 14** is about speaking in other languages, a gift God gave them, called “speaking in tongues”. **Paul is laying down rules for order and decency.** **The context** is minimizing the noise level, interruption level, confusion, etc. Paul has just said that those speaking in a tongue can only do so with 3 maximum, and only if one is there to interpret, or the *man* should remain silent – same word as women keeping silent. (**1 Cor. 14:27-31**). After the speaking, **the others would judge (v. 29)** presumably commenting on what was said, or asking questions. (By the way, when was the last time you ever saw that done in a modern church service? Or does the minister get defensive when asked questions?)

It was after all this, that Paul says the *gune*—**could be either wives or women--** should not be talking, and in this context, probably having to do with the judging of what was being said, at a minimum. I think Paul is trying to keep talking, discussion and controversy down to a minimum. ***I don't even think verses 34-35 are even talking about preaching so much as it is the subject at hand: conduct in meetings without too much rancor and confusion.***

**Women** = Greek: “*gune*” again, often translated “wives”. I believe it has to mean wives, especially since v.35 talks about **asking their husbands**. If this was a rule for all women, how could verse 35 make sense?

**“ask their own husbands” – *what if the woman has no husband, is single? Then what? What if the wife has an UNBELIEVING husband – or one who never studies his Bible?***

**“church”** = *ekklesia* , the body of believers. Does this mean in the formal church service or any time the believers are assembled? The *ekklesia* is the group of called-out PEOPLE, the assembly of people, *not* the service or the building. So what does this mean?

***What if this TOPIC being discussed is more about conduct in services as opposed to preaching?***

I believe Paul is saying “women, quit your chattering during services! And if you have a question, wait til afterwards and ask your husband.” *I personally don't think in 1 Cor 14 he's even addressing the topic of preaching, though I personally agree women are not permitted by God to be ordained pastors and preachers.*

**The questions I've raised are questions.** How do you use this passage on all women? How does it square away with the clear examples of women prophesying in 1 Cor 11:5, and Priscilla helping to teach Apollos?

Now let me say a few things I've observed also – while remembering the 2 passages we've just read as well:



- **Some of the deepest spiritual conversations I've ever had, have been with women.** And quite frankly, I suspect more women study God's word than men do. I've seen many cases where a wife has a deeper understanding and insight than her husband does. Of course, I'm speaking in generalities here from my own observations. Many, many men are excellent students of God's word too. I've also seen some women really lacking in any interest in God's word, or ability to grasp its depth, as well. But I've also seen women who are very deep.

CONCLUSIONS: Here's what I have come to believe after literally hour after hour of studying this topic:

- women have as high a calling in eternity as any man and we are co-heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7)
- they have a God-level role of being a suitable helper (God is also OUR helper)
- If we men don't live with our wives with understanding, our prayers will be hindered (1 Pet 3:7)
- God's ideal is for the man to be a loving leader, *as* Christ leads and loves His church
- Women were prophets also, and will be again in the last days. We'd better get used to it.
- Women DID speak under inspiration in church at times, and did prophesy – but did not PREACH or dominate the men. And there will be women prophets in the near future once again, so let's get used to it. As long as they'll let the rest of us “judge” and evaluate their word of prophecy, as scripture says in 1 Cor. 14:29.
- **Wives** – the focus of the Greek word *gune*-- are told not to needlessly talk during services. Even among groups that don't believe women should ever teach or speak spiritually, I have yet to see women remain totally silent when God's people are together. After all “churches” is *ekklesia* – meaning the body of called out ones, not the building, and not necessarily even the church service. (Although the Greek Ekklesias were public meetings, and Greek women were indeed prohibited from speaking in those)
- I do not believe women should be ordained as church pastors or be preaching sermons – because God designed the church to function with male leaders. That was GOD's stated preference. But this *doesn't preclude all* spiritual activity from women.
- I do believe women can lead in seminars for women, including in prayer
- I'm always honored to discuss spiritual matters of the word with women, and often come away with some deep thoughts shared with me
- I'd have no problem personally with women discussing spiritual matters in a home-study with a mixed group, if its not the formal church service time.
- I'd have no problem with women choir directors or even women leaders outside the church context. I've seen some *phenomenal* leadership by some very great women leaders and speakers.

Let's glorify God for the great plans He has – for all His children, whether sons or daughters.

.....

